

PROPOSED ADDITION TO THE "OFFICIAL LIST OF SPECIFIC TRIVIAL NAMES IN ZOOLOGY" OF THE TRIVIAL NAME "SYRIACUS" ROTHSCILD, 1910 (AS PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION "STRUTHIO CAMELUS SYRIACUS"), THE TRIVIAL NAME OF THE SYRIAN OSTRICH (CLASS AVES)

By R. MEINERTZHAGEN, D.S.O. (London)

(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)633)

The object of the present application is to ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to place on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology* the trivial name *syriacus* Rothschild, 1910 (as published in the combination *Struthio camelus syriacus*), the trivial name of the Syrian Ostrich.

2. The relevant facts in regard to this case are as follows :—

- (1) The Ostrich was named *Struthio camelus* by Linnaeus in 1758 (*Syst. Nat.* (ed. 10) **1** : 587). Linnaeus gave "Syria, Arabia, Libya and Africa" as the localities for this bird. In addition, he gave bibliographical references to Aldrovandus, Dodart, Seba, Willughby and Albin. The localities given for the Ostrich by the authorities cited by Linnaeus were : (1) Syria, Sind, Arabia, Libya and Arguin Island, Mauretania (Aldrovandus, through older authors cited) ; (2) Cape of Good Hope (Seba) ; (3) Africa and Arabia (Willughby) ; (4) Deserts of Arabia and Africa (Albin). No locality was specified by Dodart.
- (2) It is clear from the particulars given above that, from the point of view of the particulars given in 1758, the nominal species *Struthio camelus* comprised what are now regarded as several distinct subspecies of the Ostrich.
- (3) In 1910 the late Lord Rothschild (*Bull. brit. ornith. Club* **39** : 83) gave "North Africa" as the type locality for nominotypical *Struthio camelus camelus* and published the name *Struthio camelus syriacus* for the Syrian Ostrich, which has accordingly been known by that name for the last thirty-two years.
- (4) Quite recently (1951, *Bull. brit. ornith. Club* **71** : 45-46) Grant and Mackworth-Praed have advanced the view that "Syria," as being the first of the localities cited by Linnaeus must be regarded as the type locality of nominotypical *Struthio camelus* Linnaeus, 1758 ; they accordingly sink the trivial name *syriacus* Rothschild, 1910, as an objective synonym of nominotypical *camelus* Linnaeus, and, having thus left the North African Ostrich without an available name, give it the name *Struthio camelus rothschildi* "new race." The type locality is given as "Marandet, south Air or Azibine, Niger district, French West Africa." The holotype is an adult male in the collection of the British Museum (Natural History).

3. Captain Grant and Mr. Mackworth-Præd kindly showed me their note before it was published. I then took strong exception to the action proposed, for, in my view, if an author, when naming a new species, cites several localities, subsequent authors are free to select any of those localities as the type locality of the nominotypical subspecies, provided that the original author did not specify a type specimen. Moreover, I consider it the duty of systematists to retain names (such as *syriacus* Rothschild) which have been in use for a generation or more, if this can possibly be done. In this particular case it could not even be urged that the abandonment of the name *syriacus* Rothschild and the renaming of the North African Ostrich was required under a strict application of the *Règles*, for there is no provision in the *Règles* regulating the selection of a type locality from among a series of localities cited in the original description of a species. The action described above is therefore peculiarly unjustified and, if not quashed, will inevitably lead to confusion. At the same time that Grant and Præd's paper was published, I published a short note (*ibid.* 71 : 46), protesting against their action in rejecting the name *syriacus* Rothschild for the Syrian Ostrich. I was very glad to see that in a paper published this year (*Auk*. 69 : 343) the late Dr. James L. Peters supported my protest, writing: Meinertzhagen "objects (and quite rightly) to the action of Grant and Mackworth-Præd in rejecting *S. c. syriacus*."

4. It is a serious weakness in the *Règles* that they contain no provision for regulating the selection of type localities and thus for preventing confusion of the kind described above from arising. It is very much to be hoped that this omission will be repaired by the Copenhagen Congress in 1953 when it resumes the discussions begun in Paris in 1948 for securing greater stability in zoological nomenclature. In the meantime effective action can be taken only by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature and it is for this reason that I am submitting the present application.

5. My general purpose is to secure a ruling in favour of the maintenance of the name *syriacus* Rothschild for the Syrian Ostrich and of the name *camelus* Linnaeus for the North African Ostrich. It would be desirable that the same opportunity should be taken for granting formal recognition of the selection of "Sennar" as the type locality of nominotypical *camelus* made by Stresemann in 1926 (*Orn. Monatsber.* 1926 : 139).

6. The proposal which I accordingly submit to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is that it should :—

place the under-mentioned trivial names on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology* :—

- (i) *syriacus* Rothschild, 1910 (as published in the combination *Struthio camelus syriacus*), with type locality "Syrian desert" as designated by Rothschild ;
- (ii) *camelus* Linnaeus, 1758 (as published in the combination *Struthio camelus*), with type locality "Sennar", as selected by Stresemann in 1926).